

## METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC NETWORK ADDRESS ASSIGNMENT

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention includes a method and apparatus for automatically assigning a network address to a network device in an electronic communications network carrying inter-device communication packets to and from electronic devices located at assigned network addresses. The network device, also referred to as an appliance, communicates with at least one other network device to collect information from inter-device communication packets, which contain network address assignment information. From the network address assignment information in the communication packets, the appliance determines an available network address. The appliance assumes the available network address. The appliance may access a remote network device to retrieve an available, permanent, network configuration, including IP address.